

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20

USIA-15 SAM-01 A-01 OPR-02 SY-10 COME-00 EB-11 LAB-06

SIL-01 NIC-01 OMB-01 OC-06 CCO-00 DRC-01 IO-14 NEA-11

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R 111735Z FEB 74

FM AMEMBASSY ROME

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3226

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMCONSUL MILAN

AMCONSUL TURIN

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB, PINT, IT

SUBJECT: LABOR LEADERS MEET WITH GOVERNMENT

REF: ROME 1498 AND 1766

1. BEGIN SUMMARY. TOP LEVEL LABOR-GOVERNMENT MEETING ON FEBRUARY 8-9

ENDED INDECISIVELY WITH LABOR DISSATISFIED. GOVERNMENT PROPOSALS FOUND TOO VAGUE BY CONFEDERATIONS. THREE CONFEDERATIONS CONFERRING FEBRUARY 12-13 TO DECIDE FUTURE MOVES, INCLUDING POSSIBLE GENERAL STRIKE. CHANCES THAT STRIKE WILL BE AGREED UPON PROBABLY BETTER THAN EVEN. END SUMMARY.

2. GENERAL SECRETARIES OF THE THREE ITALIAN LABOR CONFEDERATIONS

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MET WITH TOP CABINET OFFICIALS, INCLUDING PM RUMOR, FOR NINE

HOURS BEGINNING EVENING OF FEBRUARY 8. RESULTS OF MEETING WERE INDECISIVE AND UNIONS SOMEWHAT DISSATISFIED. PROSPECTS FOR CALLING OF NATIONAL GENERAL STRIKE NOT DIMINISHED BY MEETING.

3. EACH OF THREE CONFEDERATIONS ENGAGED TODAY IN EVALUATING RESULTS OF FEBRUARY 8 MEETING AND IN TAKING POSITION ON FUTURE OPTIONS. THREE CONFEDERATIONS WILL CONFER FEBRUARY 12-13, WITH CGIL STRIKE CALL HIGH ON AGENDA OF TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION.

4. NATIONAL STRIKE DECISION WILL DEPEND NOT ONLY ON EVALUATION OF FEBRUARY 8 MEETING, BUT ALSO ON EVALUATION OF IMPACT OF LARGE-SCALE STRIKE ACTIONS HELD ON FEBRUARY 7. APPROXIMATELY 1,500,000 WORKERS WERE POTENTIALLY INVOLVED IN MILAN AREA, AND IN THOSE TEXTILE, METALS AND CHEMICAL CORPORATIONS WHERE PLANT-LEVEL NEGOTIATIONS CURRENTLY UNDERWAY. ACTUAL TURNOUT WAS SUBSTANTIAL, ALTHOUGH CERTAINLY WELL BELOW POTENTIAL FIGURE. WALKOUTS LASTED FROM 2 TO 8 HOURS. CONFEDERATIONS MUST DECIDE WHETHER IT WISE TO CALL FOR NATIONAL GENERAL STRIKE SO SOON AFTER FEBRUARY 7 EVENTS.

5. IN FEBRUARY 8 MEETING, GOVERNMENT PRESENTED NUMBER OF PROPOSALS TO MEET CURRENT LABOR CONCERNS. THUS, GOVERNMENT PROMISED TO DEVOTE 100 BILLION LIRE TO MAINTAIN PRICES OF STAPLES AT REASONABLE LEVELS, BUT DID NOT INDICATE EXACTLY HOW THIS WAS TO BE DONE. GOVERNMENT ALSO PROPOSED LUXURY TAX; RAISING SUPER GAS SUBSTANTIALLY BUT REGULAR GAS NOMINALLY; NEW EXTENSION RENT CONTROLS; INCREASE FIRST CLASS RAIL FARES ONLY; A VAGUELY DEFINED LOW-RENT SUPPORT PROGRAM; AND EQUALLY IMPRECISE PROMISES TO UNDERTAKE INDUSTRIAL AND AGRICULTURAL INVESTMENTS IN THE SOUTH. IN ADDITION, GOVERNMENT PROPOSED PLANS FOR IMPROVING PUBLIC TRANSPORT AND FOR STEPPED-UP PUBLIC CONSTRUCTION.

6. COMMENT: APART FROM VAGUENESS OF GOVERNMENT PROPOSALS, LABOR ALSO UNHAPPY THAT GOVERNMENT APPROACHED MEETING WITH PRE-FABRICATED POSITIONS RATHER THAN ENGAGING IN OPEN-ENDED DISCUSSIONS. CLOSER INSPECTION OF GOVERNMENT PROPOSALS MAY PERSUADE UNIONS THAT GOVERNMENT IS DOING ALL IT CAN TO MEET PROBLEMS AS PERCEIVED BY LABOR. HOWEVER, GENERAL STRIKE DECISION WILL BE BASED ON INTERNAL UNION POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC CONSIDERATIONS, BOTH WITHIN AND AMONG THE THREE CONFEDERATIONS.

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7. CISL IS IN PARTICULARLY DELICATE POSITION IN CONSIDERING STRIKE CALL. NO MATTER HOW MUCH LABOR GIVES ASSURANCE THAT NATIONAL STRIKE NOT DIRECTED AGAINST GOVERNMENT, IT BOUND TO BE INJURIOUS TO GOVERNMENT DOMINATED BY CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS, TO WHICH PARTY PREPONDERANCE OF CISL MEMBERS BELONG. UIL IS COMMITTED TO JOINING STRIKE IF FEBRUARY 8 MEETING DEEMED UNSATISFACTORY. UIL MUST NOW DECIDE HOW IT FEELS ON THIS SCORE. CGIL, STRIKE IDEA

ORIGINATOR, RELISHES ROLE OF LEADERSHIP IN THIS ACTION. WHILE
IT IS TRUE CGIL HAS EXPRESSED NO INTEREST IN TOPPLING CURRENT
GOVERNMENT, INDUSTRIAL UNION PRESSURES FOR GENERAL STRIKE ACTION
MAY PROVE IRRESTIBLE. CHANCES FOR GENERAL NATIONAL STRIKE, A SUB-
JECT WHICH WAS ABSENT FROM POST-MEETING COMMUNIQUE OF UNIONS, AND
WHICH
WOULD PROBABLY BE OF TWO-FOUR HOURS DURATION, NOW PROBABLY SLIGHTLY
BETTER THAN EVEN. VOLPE

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